

Blue Mold Rot in Stored Apples

Blue mold rot is the common rot of apples in storage. The presence of this fungus in a cellar or storage house is made evident by the familiar strong musty smell, and where this characteristic odor is present blue mold rot is present somewhere. The blue mold fungus enters apples by way of wounds, worm-holes, bruises or cracks and when the temperature is high it rots the fruit very quickly. After a few days there appears on the brown rot spot dusty pustules, sometimes nearly white, but usually with a blue-green tinge. The pustules are made up of millions of spores which are so small and light that they are carried about by air currents like dust. These spores may easily start rot in other apples, especially if the surface of the fruit is moist enough to cause the spores to germinate readily. Blue mold rot can also pass from a rotten spot to the fruit which touches it, and in this way a large number of fruits may become infected from each other. The blue mold fungus is far more likely to cause damage in cellars than in the open, and it rarely causes much damage to apples outside of storage.

The means that can be employed in preventing loss from blue mold rot are all based on the features just outlined.

(1) An important point in apple storage is to have the cellar clean to start with. All old fruit, vegetables and dirt should be removed, and the interior washed with some disinfectant, or given a coat of whitewash. Whitewash has the effect of locking up any floating spores left over from the previous winter.

(2) The temperature should be kept low. Apples keep best a few degrees above the freezing point, and at this low temperature the rot fungus grows very slowly or not at all.

(3) The fruit should not have a moist surface. The air should have plenty of moisture, otherwise the apples will shrivel, but sudden changes of temperature will cause the fruit to sweat, which means that air moisture has been deposited on the surface.

(4) Apples should be picked over frequently, and all rotten fruits removed before they have had a chance to form spores and thus infect the rest. The peculiar odor associated with blue mold rot should not be noticeable in well stored apples, and will not be, if rotten fruits are promptly removed.

(5) Apples keep better and will not rot so badly when stored so that there is a free circulation of air to every fruit. For this reason it is better to store them in crates, bins or slatted boxes, rather than in deep congested piles. If it is necessary to put them in piles ventilation of the mass may be provided by using false walls, false floors, and ventilating shafts made of slats and placed at intervals so that they reach the floor.